

## National Pollution Prevention Week Thursday, September 23

Knock-knock. Everybody now, "Who's there?" Very nice. Kumquat. "Kumquat-who?" Kumquietly or else we will be forced to develop more regulations that are increasingly cumbersome, costly, and restrictive...and did I mention that there will be fees and countless testing and reporting requirements associated with this **service**!

Now none of us wants that. That's why we have voluntary pollution prevention programs! Voluntary programs have many advantages over conventional regulatory ones -- most significantly they give organizations a chance to do it their way -- the way that makes sense to them, not the way a bunch of reg-writers see it (sorry Mike). One of the primary reasons that voluntary programs are spawned is because the environmental impacts of a given industry or activity is being scrutinized and there are new regulations **a-looming!** So make haste, and get on the voluntary P2 band-wagon!

Guess What? The voluntary programs are finally beginning to work! Remember Monday's email about how P2's a long, long road? Well, it's 3 days later in P2 Week -- which is like 3 years plus in P2-voluntary-program-development-time! Sometimes it takes double that long to develop a great idea into a program and to have it take off. But even in these troubled times of materialism and mistrust, the voluntary approach can work! Here are a couple of examples --

### **Healthcare: *Aye, What a Bloody Mess it Was!***

Am I talking about what happens in the ER / OR ? Well kind of - but what I'm really talking about is all the wastefulness that takes place in hospitals! Surgical kits, gowns, medications - sterilized, packed in layers of plastic, paper, and cardboard - everything in healthcare is over-packaged and disposable. Medications, treatments, lab chemicals and equipment that contains mercury - where do they go? And then there's redbag wastes - the majority of what's in there doesn't need to be - all that paper, all those plastics, and pizza boxes and soda cans! And historically, most of that regulated waste was incinerated. Tons of wastes generated every day, toxics improperly disposed, and one of the largest contributors of mercury and dioxins to the environment with statistical ties to impacts on human health.

That was the rap-sheet on the wastefulness of the healthcare industry. Medical waste incinerators were already getting hit hard and being phased out, but the industry was still prime for a regulatory crackdown. However, in 1998, EPA and the American Hospital Association signed a voluntary agreement to do better -- and that agreement eventually spawned Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) ([www.h2e-online.org](http://www.h2e-online.org)). Based in P2, H2E has more than 900 signatory healthcare partners representing over 3100 healthcare facilities -- all pledging voluntarily to the H2E goals of eliminating mercury, reducing wastes by 50% by 2010, and significantly decreasing the use of toxics in their facilities.

In the last couple of years, state-based *Champion* programs have spawned in order to help bring the message home -- and this approach is working -- in Virginia, we started *Virginia Hospitals for a Healthy Environment* at the end of 2003 -- to date, we now have nearly 90 facilities and over half of the hospitals in the state committed to the program! Check us out! ([www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/vh2e](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/vh2e)) It's almost scary when something works the way you hoped it might!

### **EMS & ISO14001: *Who Needs That?***

Okay, sometimes voluntary programs spawn because they are just too good of an opportunity to pass up. 6 or 7 years ago, Environmental Management Systems and ISO14001 was a topic of discussion in some legislative committee. International Standardization Organization? 14001? We don't want that European-driven stuff here, do we? *We don't need no stinking ISO certifications!* Well, it seemed like a good idea and all, a systematic approach to continuously improve on environmental performance. So, we jumped on it -- and eventually developed what became our *Virginia Environmental Excellence Program (VEEP)* ([www.deq.virginia/veep](http://www.deq.virginia/veep)).

Today, VEEP and EMS drive everything we do in our P2 program -- more than 175 facilities are in the program and either have or are working on an EMS. Our program continues to gain more and more steam and has actually achieved some validation with the regulatory side of our agency. What it

potentially means for the agency is to be able to lessen our regulatory concern about these 175 facilities. Theoretically, in the long haul, these folks and their EMS's will be taking care of themselves and improving their environmental performance here after year...and "*? ...doing it their way!*"?

### **Use That Logo!**

One of the main benefits of joining a voluntary P2 program is public recognition. Sure, we can work to promote what you're doing -- we might give you an award and put out a press release -- but the rest is up to you to promote yourselves. Use that logo! That's how the general public will know that you are proud of your commitment to the environment! It's a snowball effect -- use the logo, and the public will become familiar with the program and eventually begin to understand it and appreciate your membership.

The best example of logo that everyone now recognizes -- I think it's *Energy Star*. Appliance-makers have embraced it as a selling-tool and display the rating prominently in their advertising. Now, all consumers look for it!

*Businesses for the Bay* ([www.b4Bay.org](http://www.b4Bay.org)) is another successful voluntary P2 program where members are finally beginning to see the benefits of using the logo. Southern States in Chesapeake, VA uses the B4Bay logo on some of its fertilizers. And more recently, Smithfield Foods has placed the logo on all of its 450 delivery trucks. That's awesome, baby!

**P2 Tips** (from our readers with slight edits to get them by the censors!)

**Mmm, Mmm, Good!** Tasty recipes for yummy backyard compost --

<http://www.geocities.com/PicketFence/1441/compost.html>

<http://www.allspecies.org/neigh/comprecipe.htm>

**Get Wired.** How can you save time in the mornings...and avoid the cost and wastes of making coffee -- shower with caffeine-soap! <http://www.thinkgeek.com/caffeine/accessories/5a65/>

**Trampoline Lawn.** To find out when your grass needs watering, step on it. If it springs back up, it doesn't need watering. If the blades of grass lie flat, water it. But be sure to turn the sprinkler on at a low speed to avoid wasteful runoff. Remember, overwatering promotes shallow root growth, making your lawn less hardy.

**Put Gas Back-in-Tank!** Spending \$5 to replace an old, leaky or missing gas cap on your automobile will save as much as a gallon of gasoline every 15 days and keep about 165 pounds of toxic, cancer-causing chemicals per year from getting into the air. A new gas cap pays for itself in less than three months. The next time you fill up, check your cap. If it's cracked or won't make a good seal, it's time to buy a new one. Last year in Washington state, about 5 percent of tested vehicles were found to be using faulty gas caps. That translates to about 19,000 tons of chemicals, such as benzene, entering the air.

**Tomorrow is your last day -- meaning today is your last chance for sharing P2 wisdom! Send 'em to me!**